

Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training

State Workforce Investment Office

1511 Pontiac Avenue, Cranston, RI

Conference Room 73-1

Workforce Innovation Fund Grant

Community Partners Meeting

February 6, 2012

9:30 am – 11:00 am

Minutes

In Attendance: Manuela Raposa (Dorcas Place), Cindy Scott (Lifespan), Carmen Fergusen (UWRI), Alaina Johnson (Stepping Up), Peggy Benz (The Education Exchange), Susan Mahoney (The Education Exchange), Margie McLaughlin (HCA), Ruth Ricciarelli (HARI), Lisa Pasqualini (Jonnycake), Fruma Efreom (Child and Family), Lori Quaranta (Child and Family), Karen Dockery (Child and Family), Christine Yankee (Goodwill), Denise Doktor (Goodwill), Wendy Mackie (RI Marine Trades), Heather Singleton (RI Hospitality Education Foundation), Cheryl Dacosta (Tech Collective), Jen Cornwall (RI Marine Trades Association), Tekla Moquin (Year Up), Heather Gaydos (Institute for Nonviolence), Mike Van Leesten (OIC of RI), Suzanne Austin (BVCAP), Bianca Policastro (BVCAP), Dan Erickson (Newport Boys and Girls Club), Heidi Collins (Connecting for Children and Families), Jennifer Schanex Bolwell (Crossroads), Deborah Martin (FRCA), Nancy Paradee (FRCA), Karisa Tashjian (RI

Family Literacy Initiative), Nazeen Rahman (International Institute of RI), Judy Jones (Poverty Institute), Linda Katz (Poverty Institute), Liz Lombard (Newport Skills Alliance), Brian Hannon (EBCAP), Princess Garrett (Pawtucket Adult Education), Judy Diaz (Lifespan Community Health), Sorrel Devine (PHA), Nicole Kenny (RI Foster Parents Association), Andrew Branson (Providence Plan), Russell Partridge (WARM Center Westerly), Melanie LaMoutian (West Bay Community Action), Craig Baker (Jobs for Progress), Joanne Hoops (Boys and Girls Club of Newport), Jill Holloway (RIAE Center for Professional Development), Pheamo Witcher (Genesis), Alberto deBargo (Central Falls Housing Authority), Robert Delaney (Institute for Labor Studies)
Facilitator: Kristin Lehoullier

Feedback on Systems Integration Priorities

Kristin shared the design team's current thinking about the systems alignment work that might be proposed for this grant and asked the group for examples of ways in which the system is dysfunctional and impeded their ability to deliver services

Responses Included:

- We need to make the One Stops truly one stops. Historically, the cost of doing this has made this unfeasible.**
- We need to move towards a set of integrated reporting and performance outcomes.**
- The single biggest issue is transportation – if we can't get students to jobs we have already lost the battle.**
- The timeframes we have to move someone into a job are unrealistic**

for students who have a very low literacy level. Most jobs that they can obtain after 6 months are not sustainable and it defeats the purpose of moving someone towards economic sustainability. It works against the students' best interest.

- When you are thinking about supportive services it is important to remember that the CBOs have the relationship with that client and are often in the best position to provide or coordinate supportive services.

- You need to make sure the pathways are transparent – we need a directory or something that is real-time and accessible by all.

- Someone should go back through the employment training provider list and do a quality review to make sure the providers on that list are aligned with the best practices we want to see.

- We need a universal screening tool. Right now clients have to go through so many different hoops. It often takes a long time before they can even enter a program.

- We need to think about how we can support the transition to employment (and not just to 90 days retention but longer.) It might need to be up to 24 months.) How can we support that student to continue to progress. If students saw that an entry level job wasn't a dead-end we might have less attrition.

- There has been so much institutional turnover and loss of staff that it is not clear anymore what is legislatively required and what is habit or local policy. We need to revisit this.

- How do we create a real partnership with employers? We need to expand communication with employers – we need their input on what

they need on a real-time basis. We also need their input to our program design.

- We need to educate employers on many levels:

- o There are many students for whom English is their second language but who also have strong skills from their home country. If employers had a better understanding of how language was acquired, they might be more open to integrating on the job opportunities with ESL instruction.

- o We also need to breakdown stereotypes around whom we are serving. By the time clients complete our programs they are ready for work. They offer a lot of talent and they are a real resource.

- We need to be screening and assessing people the same way, no matter what door they come through. We need tools that will work across populations.

- We also need to find a common approach to doing BCIs.

- We need to change paradigm about how we look at our clients. We need to find their strengths and build on them. So much of what we do is deficit-based e.g. what they don't have or can't do. What if we looked at the strengths of a student first instead?

- We have ESL/GED waitlists. If we could serve more people we could place more people in job training more quickly.

- The technology tools that we have in place now are not accessible to low-income learners without a computer.

- Many of the technology tools are not consistently available to CBOs either.

- There needs to be incentives for employers to partner with CBOs.

- There are incentives for employers now e.g. tax incentives.
- In our experience, employers don't like reimbursement incentives.
How can we provide upfront incentives for them?
- We need to have a centralized, web-based portal with information on employer needs.
- The Small Business Development Center represents employers and could provide CBOs with access to that information.
- We need an industry recognized workforce readiness credential.
- The Industry Partnerships are regularly surveying employer needs.
There just needs to be more communication of that information out to the field e.g. monthly e-news. The GWB is working on that. There are also a couple of industry-based work readiness certificates that already exist.
- We have the Center for Women and Enterprise as a resource.
- We need to centralize assessment and referral and incorporate the use of technology into the process.
- We need to create more work opportunity for youth. We should have a hub for youth recruitment.
- We need to be focused on strategies that create jobs.
- We need to increase the amount of contextualized curriculum that we are using.

Feedback on Potential Demonstration Strategies

Kristin shared the design team's ideas for potential demonstration strategies and asked the group for feedback and other ideas.

Responses Included:

- Entrepreneurship training would serve a range of clients from those

that have been dislocated to those that have limited English skills.

- We should think about the 16-18 population that will not have to stay in school due to the new law. These are kids for whom the traditional educational model is not working. How can we address their needs? We should build a hub that connects older youth and adult workforce development efforts with industry. We should build on the existing youth system as a model – the next step for that system is to strengthen the industry connections. This is a great opportunity.**

- We should think about how to build apprenticeship models into this. Apprenticeships give employers a chance to test out people before hiring for the long-term.**

- We need a centralized assessment and referral process that is more streamlined and includes the development of a life-long learning plan or a skills development plan that articulates a longer term career direction for the client.'**

- We should not pursue a work readiness certificate – we have flirted with that over the years and it is not a high impact solution. Employers don't give it much credence.**

- How can clients participate in tracking their progress? What about an online portfolio?**

- I worry that in any of these strategies it would be easy to lose sight of the vulnerable populations.**

- We have several successful models for the ex-offender population that we could build on. With Green Pathways we have a 60% placement rate to date.**

- What if rather than making the One Stops "the hub" in terms of**

service delivery, we utilize the existing network of service providers i.e. CBO's,FBO's, PHA's, DHS/ORS, Schools, Libraries etc. to provide work readiness, case management and job development services? This would allow DLT counselors to be stationed throughout the state, rather than in the 3-4 existing netWORKri Center locations. This would more closely resemble the Youth system and aligning the two systems would provide for a more seamless transition from one system to the other.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.